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ABSTRACT

After over 20 years with the same senior administration, Floyd College, a two-year college connected to the University of Georgia, underwent a change of leadership. As a result, the college climate, as well as its organizational procedures, have radically changed. In the past, decisions on promotion and tenure started from top management. Now, faculty present their own portfolios to a committee of administrators who make the recommendation to the president. The college has also experienced major divisional restructuring and relocation, forcing division chairs to cope with challenging situations in leading departmental faculty and responding to higher management initiatives. Based on the chairs' experiences, suggestions for effective transitions include the following: (1) understand why people resist change; (2) prove effectiveness to faculty by winning a few victories early on; (3) pick the issues for which to fight carefully; (4) bring previous experience to bear in a tactful manner; (5) give younger faculty important assignments and committee work; (6) keep departmental faculty informed and involved in shared decision-making; (7) admit mistakes publicly; (8) encourage team-teaching across disciplines; (9) keep a sense of humor; (10) be generous with travel money and overtime when possible, but stringent when necessary; (11) be generous with praise for others; (12) treat secretaries, student assistants, and other college support staff well; and (13) keep in contact with fellow chairs. Contains 14 references. (TGI)

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WHEN A WHOLE COLLEGE CHANGES:

OVERCOMING INERTIA, MOTIVATING VETERAN FACULTY AND STAFF

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WHEN A WHOLE COLLEGE CHANGES:
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Biographies of Presenters

Exir B. Brennan earned her Ph. D. in administration of higher education at The University of Alabama. She has served in private and public sectors of higher education, as a teacher, administrator, and library director. Recent duties include directing a program in Business Administration for working adults, and teaching in the Graduate School at the University of Alabama. She currently serves as Chair of the Division of Learning Resources at Floyd College. Her interests include choral music, legal research and writing, hiking, and nineteenth century detective fiction.

William F. Mugleston is Associate Professor of History and Chair of the Social and Cultural Studies Division at Floyd College. He holds degrees from The Johns Hopkins University and the University of Virginia and a Ph. D. in history from the University of Georgia. He has published widely in the areas of history and teaching. He was previously Chair of the Division of Social Science and Technology at Mountain View College of the Dallas County Community College District, Dallas, Texas, and also Research Associate for the production of a U.S. history telecourse.

Judy C. Perdue is Chair of the Division of Science, Math, and Physical Education at Floyd College. Prior to this position, she was the Library Director at Floyd. Dr. Perdue's undergraduate work was in foreign languages, and her first graduate degree was in library science. While working as a librarian at Iowa State University, she returned to graduate school to earn an M.S. and Ph. D. in entomology. After six years as library director in two community colleges, Dr. Perdue was asked to assume her present position.

One of the greatest challenges in education is to move a college into its "second generation" of leadership. Floyd College in Rome, Georgia, is going through just such a transition. Floyd is a two-year community college and part of the 34-college University System of Georgia. Founded in 1970 with an initial enrollment of 545, the College now has some 3000 students--on a main campus in a suburban area of Rome, a new satellite downtown campus, and three off-campus centers. It serves a seven-county area of northwest Georgia. It is also the owner of its own 24-hour-a-day cable television station, which has meant new and challenging opportunities in distance learning.

For over 20 years the founding president, academic and business vice presidents, and a few other senior staffers made all the major decisions for the College. The atmosphere was like a club or a close family, and many of the now-senior faculty found Floyd to be an excellent place to settle in for the long haul in their careers. One of the few negatives we have heard about "the old days" is that junior faculty often felt frozen out of the decision-making process.

Now within a three-year period, the College has a new president, a new vice president for academic affairs, and four new Division chairs. Eight Divisions have been combined into five. Faculty who were once strangers now find themselves working side-by-side. Almost every unit of the College has been physically relocated, some to different campuses.

In the past, decisions on promotion and tenure were made, usually quite routinely, from the top down. Now faculty must take the initiative in presenting their own portfolios to a committee of administrators, who make the recommendation to the president. Other major decisions, which were often made over coffee in the academic vice president's office, are now made by deliberations of the faculty or in committees--a less efficient but more democratic and inclusive process. (We are not arguing here that the old system produced bad decisions, merely that the new style is more cumbersome and slow-moving.) In short, the current president was most certainly telling the truth when he told the Presidential Search Committee, "Choose me and I'll bring change to Floyd College"!

He has implemented some of these changes, such as Divisional restructuring and relocation, in ways that themselves might seem arbitrary or dictatorial. Some decisions, he felt, probably quite rightly, simply had to be made without putting them to a vote. It is ironic that this change from the old

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"benevolent dictatorship" to a second generation of committee-led participative decision-making was done often in an arbitrary way itself. Otherwise, it would never have come! In other words, it may have been necessary to chop and cut, leaving temporary chaos, in order to lead us into more responsible roles. We should add that all this has happened with no one losing their job, a testament to the basic decency of the new senior leadership team.

Now, where does this leave the new Division chairs, those strange creatures who are daily on the firing line and who are wedged in between administration and faculty? Each of us chairs a Division that is a marriage of two previously distinct Divisions--Exir's is a combination of developmental studies and learning resources; Judy's was previously the math/science and physical education Divisions; Bill's combined the old social science and humanities Divisions. We are each part of the "new generation" at Floyd, having held our present positions some 1 1/2 years (although each of us has administrative and faculty experience from previous jobs). We have each faced some challenges, navigated some tricky situations, unquestionably made some mistakes, but also worked with some extraordinarily fine people. Herewith a few thoughts, cautions, and suggestions, in no particular order of importance:

1. Understand why people resist change. It isn't simply a case of "You're right and they're wrong." The status quo is comfortable for most of us; change brings fear and discomfort; change challenges deeply and honestly held beliefs and traditions; the cost of change may be seen as too great; people change at different paces; for employees with unstable family situations, the workplace may be their only stable environment.

2. Try to "win a few" early on. You can be sure your faculty will be quietly watching to gauge your effectiveness with the higher-ups. This may be unfair when you're new, but it's there nonetheless. An example: In one of our Divisions when offices were being moved, faculty were told they would be moving from private to shared offices. Not surprisingly, this created a lot of negative stir. Through negotiations, a little luck, and the fine capabilities of the Physical Plant staff, we were able to get private offices for everyone.

3. On the other hand, pick your fights judiciously. Learn what is worth falling on your sword for, and what isn't. This will mark you among the higher-ups as a team player, and in the end enhance your effectiveness and help your Division.

4. Make a tough decision early on. Life and administration

being what they are, such an opportunity won't take long to find! Two of us had to deny promotions to veteran faculty of marginal capabilities who felt they were worthy of it. Another of us had to expedite the departure of a long-time secretary who simply could not adapt to the new order of things. Your decision will anger some, but you will get a reputation as a leader willing to make a tough call and stand by it. In the end you will likely earn more respect than by taking the seemingly easier path of trying to please everyone.

5. Tactfully bring in your previous experiences. Faculty who have stayed in one place for 20 years or more can be very fine people and yet lack a sense of perspective when it comes to change. They tend to think the sky is falling when asked to adjust to new structures and paradigms. It so happens that each of us has worked in places that were much more stressful than Floyd with supervisors far less sensitive. At the right moments, remind your people that "It's a lot worse other places."

6. Give your younger faculty important assignments and committee work. They are your allies for the long haul and they'll appreciate finally being recognized.

7. Keep your people informed. They see you as the conduit with the higher administration. This helps make them feel that they count.

8. Bring faculty more into shared decision-making. This can easily be done in such areas as budget- and schedule-building. This gives them ownership of the decisions.

9. Admit it publicly when you've made a mistake. Don't stonewall, try to cover it up (you won't), or try to "fix" it with a worse decision. Remember, you are the direct representative of the higher administration. Put a human face on all you do.

10. Encourage team-teaching across disciplines. This helps build respect and friendships that weren't there before.

11. Keep a sense of humor! You'll need it. Laughter is truly great therapy. Have at least one good laugh with your people every day. Take your job seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously.

12. Be generous when you can (travel money, teaching overloads for pay) and stringent when you must.

13. Be generous (and genuine) in your praise of others. It costs absolutely nothing, creates a motivating environment, and singles you out as a worthy person. Applaud also for

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their good work those not in your Division. You never know who may be working for you someday, or vice versa.

14. Treat very well your secretaries, student assistants, and other college support staff, such as custodians and bookstore personnel. These important and often overlooked people can make your job much easier. Respect and follow the expertise of those who have been there longer than you. When you're new on the job, the secretaries will bail you out of trouble time and time again. Go out of your way to be nice to the people who are unpopular on campus. You never know where help will come from.

15. Go all out in getting raises for your faculty, especially the younger ones. This is the bottom line for many people, and it is nearly impossible to err on the side of generosity, as long as you are equitable in doing it.

16. Lastly, keep in contact with your fellow chairs, to commiserate and compare notes. Lunches off-campus are best.

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